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December 3, 2018

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 18-336 and CC Docket No. 92-105 regarding the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018.

Dear Madam,

United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey appreciates the opportunity to comment on the current effort undertaken by the Federal Communications Commission to study the feasibility of designating a three-digit number to the National Suicide Hotline and to assess the effectiveness of the current National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. In Southeastern Pennsylvania and Southern New Jersey our United Way is fighting to end poverty by investing in 211 and Early Learning, Opportunity & Employment and Economic Empowerment.

We acknowledge efforts are needed to create a safe place for all people to call – especially underserved or marginalized populations such as seniors, people with physical or intellectual disabilities, people that identify as LGBTQ+, Veterans, American Natives, non-English speakers, and individuals facing complex problems such as substance/opioid use, human trafficking, and domestic violence. Our organization has a 97 year history of reaching out to the underserved and today we partner with businesses, nonprofit agencies, government stakeholders to drive systemic changes to solve our community's toughest problems.

We encourage the FCC to consider our 211 work here in Greater Philadelphia as a vital partner in increasing access to suicide prevention and intervention services. Since 2012, we have invested over 5 million dollars in our 211 systems and answered approximately 55,000

requests for help each year. Moreover, each year our United Way invests more than 14 million in Early Learning, Opportunity & Employment and Economic Empowerment. These critical investments position us to be key partners in the success of an improved mental health and crisis response system.

Another three-digit code may erode the simplicity of a single point of access for community help. Despite concerted efforts by numerous social services, and multiple hotlines, in our community to educate and market the distinctions, a person in crisis will likely always reach for the most familiar or most accessible number. Our 211 receives calls that are better suited for 911, and our 911 partners often receive calls that we can best answer. We recommend that resources should be invested to improve a unified single point of access with a blended partnership of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and United Way's 211 services. We believe in the power of partnership to address gaps, not duplicate services, and will be a valuable partner in the fight against suicide.

You can learn more about our work at www.211sepa.org and www.nj211.org, and can reach my office for additional questions or discussion at (215) 665-2403. Thank you for your time in addressing this important issue and for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Bill Golderer
President and CEO
United Way of Greater Philadelphia & Southern New Jersey